

## **Proposed JCAHO Stroke Center Certification Program**

The American Stroke Association (ASA) is pleased to announce the exploration of a program to certify Primary Stroke Centers. The program will be offered by the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO). We are working closely with the Brain Attack Coalition (BAC), the American Academy of Neurology (AAN) and a large Advisory Working Group to guide this project.

### **Why JCAHO?**

It is known in the marketplace that if change needs to happen in a hospital setting, JCAHO can be influential. This is the reason our volunteer Advisory Working Group urged us to move forward to exploring this relationship. The changes needed in the hospital setting around care of stroke patients are significant and complex, and we hope that JCAHO will help us to rapidly drive those changes.

### **Why would a hospital want to be certified?**

Hospitals are experiencing increasing costs and decreasing reimbursements. Additionally, hospitals face expectations to provide the highest quality services on the cutting-edge of scientific development by demanding and informed consumers. The current environment calls for hospitals to improve quality of care and to find ways to differentiate and market their services. Certification is one way for hospitals to demonstrate improvements in quality of care as well as providing a way to differentiate their offerings in a competitive environment.

### **Will JCAHO visit hospitals and perform onsite reviews?**

Yes. Site visits will be an important program component. Our research has shown that many hospitals might identify themselves a Primary Stroke Center, yet when specific criteria are evaluated, there may be wide variations in adherence to BAC Recommendations and acute event guidelines. Having an organization willing to do on-site reviews will help reduce the variance in practice and drive to adherence to guidelines, resulting in better care for patients who suffer a stroke.

### **Are JCAHO reviewers experienced in stroke? How can they assess hospitals?**

JCAHO is in the process of hiring stroke-experienced reviewers. Additionally, our Advisory Working Group will assist the reviewers with training and be available for questions.

### **What does a hospital have to do to receive certification as a Primary Stroke Center?**

The certification will be based on adherence to Brain Attack Coalition recommendations for Primary Stroke Centers as well as an agreed-upon set of performance measures. An expert group is currently reviewing the measures. Performance measures and data collected in Get With the Guidelines/Stroke as well as the Paul Coverdell Acute Stroke Registry will be considered in order to allow hospitals to use existing tools to report data to JCAHO.

**Is this a JCAHO program or an ASA program?**

The program will be operated by JCAHO and branded with the JCAHO logo. ASA, along with a large volunteer group, is driving the science and program components of the program. There will be marketing materials that carry both the ASA and JCAHO logos that explain ASA's involvement.

**The AHA has historically not wanted to be involved in certifying hospitals. Has that changed?**

No. The certification of hospitals requires special expertise, and we want to leave that to an experienced organization. We were guided by our large volunteer Advisory Working Group to help make primary stroke centers a reality in the marketplace WITHOUT getting into the business of certification. This relationship allows us to do just that.

**Does JCAHO have experience in other certification programs?**

Yes. JCAHO launched a voluntary Disease Specific Care Certification program last year. This program will be launched through the same umbrella program. JCAHO's experience in hospital accreditation is well-known.

**What will hospitals be charged?**

Fees will be consistent with JCAHO's existing Disease Specific Care Certification program. The exact details of this are still being reviewed.

**How long is the certification?**

The certification is for one year, with an additional one-year extension offered. Hospitals should expect to receive an on-site evaluation once every two years.

**Will there be a listing of certified primary stroke centers?**

Yes. JCAHO will list the certified primary stroke centers on its website. We will also provide a link to the JCAHO page that contains this information from our website.

**What is the timeline for roll out?**

We are currently in the final stages of contract negotiation (August 2003). Later this year, following completion of the negotiation process, JCAHO will test the certification process in some GWTG/Stroke participating hospitals. A full national launch of the program is expected in Feb 2004.

**Why are you telling us about this program if it's not ready to launch?**

We hope that you will start working with your local Operation Stroke team to learn more about the infrastructure needed for a Primary Stroke Center. Our Acute Stroke Treatment Program is available for this purpose. (You can download this program from our website.) We also hope you will talk with your hospital administrator about the upcoming ability for your hospital to become a certified Primary Stroke Center.

**Where can I get more information?**

Please watch the ASA [www.strokeassociation.org](http://www.strokeassociation.org) and JCAHO [www.jcaho.org](http://www.jcaho.org) websites. Information will be posted about this program as we approach the launch date.

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